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ABSTRACT

The Internet is becoming the primary way that businesses communicate and receive information. Corporate Web addresses and home pages have become a valuable tool for leaving a solid mark on potential clients, consumers, and competition. To determine how differences in Web pages design reflect corporate image, a study examined Web pages from two organizational angles: professional public relations (PR) firms and retail corporations. Content analysis used a sample size consisting of eight corporations and eight PR firms, observing the various Web pages for a month. Results indicated corporations used much more elaborate and advanced graphics than did PR firms; corporations used moving graphics, highly technical pictures, and hand drawings, while PR companies relied more heavily on text to attract potential customers. The two groups also used different strategies in web page color. Corporations used many vibrant colors, while PR firms chose a simpler, more conservative color scheme. Both groups, however, used color to accomplish a certain theme. In the case of Web page link analysis, corporations used more links than PR firms did: corporations had 26 links per address while PR firms had 17 links. Corporations used external links more than PR firms did: only half the PR firms included links beyond their own organization, while every corporation used external links. Corporation links were also found to be more user-friendly. Future research may include how intended publics receive information from Web sites. By studying how effective Web pages are to the consumers, organizations can learn how to market themselves effectively to their target audience. (Contains 14 references and list of Web pages analyzed). (NKA)

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The Internet as a Reflective Mirror for a Company's Image

by
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Kim Hartz,
Marijo Wendling,
and
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ABSTRACT

Now more than ever technology is shaping the way we communicate. Computers and computer software are fundamental in the day to day conversations we have, and impressions we make on those around us. One such technological achievement is the World Wide Web. The Internet is quickly becoming the primary way that businesses communicate and receive information. Corporate web addresses and home pages have become a valuable tool for leaving a solid, impressionable mark on not only potential clients or consumers, but on competition as well. This study examines web pages from two organizational angles; professional Public Relations Firms, and retail Corporations. The mission is to determine how differences in web page design reflect corporate image.

Sections within this research paper will include a history of the Internet from the perspective of audience, sales, theoretical perspectives, and public relations opportunities; formulated hypothesis; methodology addressing research design, sampling, data collection, limitations, and other concerns; content analysis of web page graphics, color, links, and content; discussion and analysis; and references helpful for future research.

Corporate public image is just as vital to company success as product sales or services provided. Through the Internet, more people than ever before have access to business and represent an impressionable public. How corporations handle web page construction and design go a long way in determining their own image. As a result the world is a very small marketplace, and image does matter.

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine this scenario for a moment. You begin to walk outside your apartment or house to retrieve the newspaper. It is very early in the morning, and the bright sun has just started to begin its ascent into the blue sky. You stop rather suddenly at the door. Through the sunshine rays, you see a large, beautiful, silverish, white cobweb. The morning dew makes it sparkle as the sun's rays hit it. You can see that it has many layers and many connecting points. It is very detailed and intricate. You wonder to yourself, how a cobweb could be built so quickly over night and yet have such exquisite, detailed design. You are amazed with this wondrous site and duck when you go outside the door, to make sure that you do not damage the spider's creative work of art.

The Internet is very similar to the illustration above. In referring to the Internet, many call it "the web" and in numerous ways it is like a spider's web. It is an indefinite realm of complexity. It has many layers and connecting links. It has grown so quickly and so fast that some people think that it was created over night, but yet with a very detailed design. Many have wondered about this new technology. Where will it take us? How do we use it to our advantage? Many organizations have ventured into this vast technology. Some have started a web address with the intent to increase sales and inform their publics. Others, however, have lost sales and customers because their web address was ineffective, uncreative and not user-friendly. For this reason, creative and effective web designs are essential for Internet business.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Internet is an unregulated form of communication technology, which means there are endless financial opportunities for individuals and organizations to start their own businesses on the web. But if one does not know how to set up a web address to reap these beneficial qualities, what is the purpose of using this technology? Our focus is to analyze the current design of Corporations and Public Relations Firms and examine how this is reflective of their image.

A company should be able to look at its web page and see a reflection of itself like a mirror. The personality of a company should be apparent. By studying web addresses, we want to concentrate on what images are being portrayed by Corporations and Public Relations Firms and how these can be improved. The Internet has grown so quickly and so fast, many organizations have struggled to keep up with this vast new technology. There are businesses who want to open an address on the web, but do not know how to combine the elements of design to come up with effective, elaborate or creative web addresses. They may not know about the advantages of web addresses as a way to increase business and public knowledge about their organization. We want to solve this practical problem. There are a few theories that relate to the Internet, Web page design and public relations. We will relate the perspectives of Trait Theory, Compliance-Gaining Theory and Excellence in Public Relations Theory to their use on the Internet. We will examine these theories to see which one will help us to set up a model for web page design on the Internet.

DEFINITIONS

In order to begin this research venture, we must first look at some definitions. First, we will start with the Internet. Brendan Kehoe in Zen and The Art of the Internet offers this piece of wisdom that touches on both the technical and mystical aspects of the Internet:

"The Internet is a large 'network of networks'. There is no one network; rather there are regional networks. . . [which] are all interconnected. . . into one, great living thing" (4).

With this definition, one can imagine its vastness and intricacy. The Internet has grown in leaps and bounds in its development. According to Marine, Kirpatrick, Neau and Ward in the Internet: Getting Started, the original four computer links, named ARPANET, were based at the University of California, Los Angles, the University of California, Santa Barbara, the Stanford Research Institute and the University of Utah. The ARPANET was the beginning of what we know today as the Internet. During the early and mid-1970s, ARPA focused on expanding the number of linked computers and creating new software to facilitate the exchange of information between unlike computers. In 1978-79, ARPA developed the Transmission Control/Internet

Protocol (TCP/IP), a break-through in allowing dissimilar computers to communicate. The Internet then came into being. By 1980 there were 213 host computers linked. By 1984 that number had grown to 1,024 and by 1992, it was estimated that the Internet included 1,136,000 host computers world-wide (131-133).

As the Internet has grown, more and more companies have tried to learn about this new technology. The Internet has many web addresses and inter-linking sites. Some of the current technical terms used by Internet enthusiasts are defined here. Web addresses or home pages have become very popular today for businesses and individuals. The home page is the first or main page of an organization's address. Links are connecting pages or sites. When an individual designs a web address, a home page is created with a number of inter-linking pages or sites that are connected to one another. Robert Buchanan Jr., and Charles Lukaszewski in Measuring the Impact of Your Web Site comment that there are three kinds of links.

"Free links are the registration with on-line directories and posting on bulletin boards," they stated. "Traded links are web activity within the one web page reference or points to other pages of associated information, related industry groups, distributors, trade associations, vendors and customers. Paid links are extensions of on-line directory registration that provide a company with banners, paid-for-advertisements through a directory service or at related industry sites"(36).

There are also external and internal links. External links are connections that can take the user to another web address outside of the organization's home page. Internal links are connections within the organization's web address. Icons are also used frequently to designate links. Icons can be described as connections to other web addresses or internal links to more information about the organization. Another technical term to be defined is hits. Hits are how many times users visit a web address. Hits can be used as tracking devices for organizations, so they can find out how many people are visiting their web pages and use this as a device to measure its success. Buchanan and Lukaszewski define site and page hits as "...general site activity, time of the day, day of the week, and month or season of the year" (105).

By looking at these technical terms, we can see some of the elements that make up a web site. The design of a Corporation and Public Relations Firm's web address, including its home page and various links, reflects its image. Image can be defined as the public's perception of the design elements used it the web address. Collective perceptions build image. Richard Crable and Steven Vibbert, in Public Relations as Communication Management, describe an image in these terms:

"Image is a personally believed-in mental picture that is descriptive, evaluative and pre-disposing in relation to some object" (58).

Images are mental pictures of objects that people carry with them like photographs. How Corporations and Public Relations Firms manage their web addresses is reflective of how they manage their image. For example, how quickly they respond to E-mail is reflective of their business practices and image. Public perceptions are observations and interpretations based on individual past experiences. Perception is based largely on what an organization or an individual does and says. A frequent user of the Internet may have a very different opinion than a person who is new to the Internet. Publics are not studied as a whole like the general public. There are internal and external publics.

Internal publics are audiences that are within the organization itself, such as the employees, lawyers, middle management, senior management and board members. External publics are audiences that are outside of the organization, such as the competitors. stockholders, media, government, and community. These are all different publics that have different observations and perceptions. Crable and Vibbert define a public in a more specific manner.

"A public is any significant individual or identifiable group having some potential for interaction with the [organization], its actions, or its interests" (237).

From perceptions, publics may interpret, form opinions and make judgments based on the organizations' messages and actions on the Internet. Public relations practitioners manage organizations' image and public perception. Crable and Vibbert define public relations as "...The multi-phased function of communication management that is involved in researching, analyzing,

affecting and re-evaluation of relationships between an [organization] and any aspect of its environment" (5).

The Internet is a channel for public relations practitioners to educate, inform and persuade their organizations' diverse audiences. Public Relations Firms are those that specialize in the above functions. Many Public Relations Firms have also started into the business of designing web pages for other organizations. A Corporation is a number of persons or groups having specific responsibilities and are united for a particular purpose. We will be looking at both Corporations and Public Relations Firms to compare and contrast the image that they present.

According to G.A. Marken, in "Getting the Most From Your Presence in Cyberspace" in Public Relations Quarterly, there are a wide range of web pages.

"If you surf the Web, you will visit home pages that range from the glitzy, high impact, slow-to-retrieve graphic marvels to electronic versions of capabilities brochures. The weakness to most web sites is that they are being created without a clear corporate definition or goal. Most firms haven't defined why they are blending pictures, text, video and sound to communicate to this global audience. Getting on the Web with a home page is also a no-brainer. Getting the most from the Web's global reach and information delivery capabilities takes a lot of gray matter" (36).

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE INTERNET'S AUDIENCE

One would expect the Internet to have a large, wide-ranging audience because it is a new and exciting technology. However, a review of literature reveals different information. According to the Steven Ross article, "Public Relations in Cyberspace" in Public Relations Journal, he stated that, "...the Internet's 40 million user population is skewed. Eighty percent are males aged 18-30, mostly college students or recent graduates"(36).

It seems that Internet access has come down to those who can afford this new technology and those who cannot. In the article, "High-Tech Firms Launching Clients into Cyberspace" in Public Relations Journal, Sharon Van Sickle, APR, public relations principal at KVO in Portland, Oregon, comments that "The Internet is still dominated by students, academicians, defense and research people. Responses to publicity efforts on the Internet are measured more easily after the fact" (30).

This brings a lot of questions to mind. Why are so few businesses and consumers not using the web to its full capabilities? Why are there not more women using the web? Daniel Burstein and David Kline in Road Warriors: Dreams and Nightmares Along the Information Highway note that only 15.5 percent of Internet users are women. The median age is 29, average age 35 and approximately two-thirds are students, faculty, researchers or technical professionals. Cyberspace appears to be nearly devoid of consumers. Barely 10 percent of all on-line users, in fact, employ the medium for home banking, shopping, or other consumer-oriented purposes (102-103).

This presents an interesting dilemma for organizations who are trying to create a shopper's paradise, or present information about their services so that consumers will be more likely to purchase their products in the future when these people rarely go on-line.

Burstein and Kline also comment however, that "the most important quality of the Internet is that it is the most dynamic and wide-ranging interactive mass medium in history"(105).

The Internet is very attractive to users because one is able to socialize with others through e-mail, chat rooms and seek out new information one might not otherwise have access to because of one's location. That is why businesses and consumers should use the Web to its potential. Burstein and Kline give advice to those looking to achieve the maximum benefit from this new technology.

In a Harvard Business Review article by consultants, Joseph Pine, Don Peppers, and Martha Roger, they argued that companies seeking to thrive in the future will need to "use technology to become two things: *a mass customizer* that efficiently provides individually customized goods and services, and a *one-to-one marketer* that elicits information from each customer about his or her specific needs and preferences. The correct combination of these qualities creates a learning relationship--an ongoing connection that becomes smarter as the two interact with each other. They collaborate to help smart companies keep their customers forever, or at least keep them one step ahead of their competitors, unless of course the competition is even smarter" (264).

By using this technique, an organization can find out how to reach the Internet's audience and improve its web page presence. Feedback about one's web site can really be an useful tool. These inputs can help the designer to make the web page more effective and creative.

G.A. Marken writes that, "The Web site can be an open forum for new product ideas, product enhancements and obtain inputs on products and services customers would like to see. However, the information has to be balanced with common sense and an understanding of your marketplace as a whole. The technically sophisticated Web surfer is usually not the firm's average customer" (37).

So if web users are not the firm's normal customer, organizations need to make an extra effort to analyze the Internet audiences' needs and wants before venturing onto the Web. Those

who do are organizations that have been able to make considerable business profits from their web sites.

INTERNET AND SALES

Internet businesses have found that cybershoppers are attracted to the ability to research and compare products before initiating transactions, in contrast to other practices where one must travel store to store in order to compare products. Mark Hodges writes in his article, "Is Web Business Good Business?" from Technology Review, that Web sales are booming.

"Internet-based businesses are expected to boost sales from $518 million in 1997 to $6.6 billion by the year 2000. Web sites can offer more detailed and extensive information than a typical customer-service representative is willing or able to provide, either in person or over the telephone. The Internet marketplace also may be well-suited for customers looking for rare or hard-to-find items"(22).

Dylan Tweney also writes that Internet sales can be profitable in his InfoWorld article, "Making Money on the Web: What Is Really Working?"

"The big boom in Internet business is in transaction-oriented Web sites: on-line points of sale in which consumers or businesses can purchase goods and services with little more than a browser and Internet access. This year, Web-based transactions will account for about three-quarters of the revenue generated by Internet-based ventures" (63).

Web-based transactions can be thought of as the business impact of having a Web presence. An organization can increase sales just by giving product information. Orders can be placed using the Web but can still be billed in the same old fashion. Purchases do not have to be made using a customer's credit card. Many companies have in fact stopped asking for credit card numbers because of the insecurities of the Internet. These authors bring to light that a web page can hold many beneficial opportunities for organizations to interact with customers on a one-to-one level. Hodges also writes that many businesses can tap into the Web's wonders with the right design tools.

"Commonly companies fail to exploit the capacity for interactivity, offering static sites that serve as electronic versions of brochures. Successful companies, in contrast, have developed dynamic, information-rich sites that create an informal, often whimsical atmosphere that consumers enjoy searching whether they buy products or not and that take advantage of the Internet's unique attributes. Good web business sites offer visitors a wealth of useful, diverting information in addition to detailed product descriptions" (23).

The organization who has a web site must keep in mind that web users want to be impressed by the design of the web page and the information that you present. An organization who keeps in mind the audience when designing the web page will improve sales. Audience analysis is important as is customer care. Those businesses who take care of their customers on the Internet can be trusted for future business. Simple tasks such as answering E-mail are important public relations practices for organizations. Interaction with one's publics through the Internet shows that the Internet can be used a public relations tool. To analyze this statement further, one must look at theoretical perspectives within communication and public relations.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The first theory that can be applied to the observation of web pages is the Trait Theory of Communicator Style, by Robert Norton. This theory states that we communicate on two levels. Littlejohn states in Theories of Communication, "Not only do we give information, but we also present that information in a certain form that tells others how to understand and how to respond to a message" (108). These style messages show how the first message should be taken.

Individual companies use web pages to communicate to both existing and potential customers. They choose the "image" they want to portray and reinforce this image with the multiple pages that send messages to the viewer. They can shape the way the viewer interprets the message by having distinct paths through the pages. Each web site has its own "personality." The creators of these images have decided to communicate on a certain level which guides the viewer in perceiving the company in a certain way.

Another relating theory is the Compliance-Gaining Theory researched by Marwell and Schmitt. In the book Theories of Communication, Littlejohn defines the theory this way. "Compliance is an exchange for something else supplied by the compliance seeker" (119). Basically, if you do as I want, I will give you something in return. It states that the reason people do things is to get things back in return.

All organizations want to make money. The web is a great place to get the message out and market to all sorts of audiences. It provides "free" entertainment in the hopes of creating future business. Corporations want something in return for their web site. This investment requires a certain amount of return for their time and money spent on the creation of the site.

Jim Grunig conceptualized four models of public relations behavior based on the combination of two dimensions. In an article titled, "Corporations, Environments and Models of Public Relations," Grunig states, "Public relations behaviors seem to vary along two independent dimensions--one way versus two-way and asymmetric versus symmetric. It follows then, that there should be four models of public relations, which represent the combinations of the two dimensions."(8).

In the Manager's Guide To Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management, Dozier, Grunig and Grunig articulate the four models.

1. **Publicity/Press Agentry Model** - in which the practitioner seeks favorable media exposure for the client using any means, including puffery, hype and deception. This is the oldest form of public relations.
2. **Public Information Model** - seeks positive media coverage, but places a major emphasis on developing a relationship with the media, and indirectly with the public, based on truth and trust.
3. **Two-way Asymmetrical Model** - uses market research techniques to gather information on selected publics in order to tailor media and message strategies with intent of influencing the target group toward the sponsoring organization's predetermined position or view.

4. **Two-way Symmetrical Model** - uses sophisticated market research to discern the thinking of target publics, but the organization then factors this information into its decision-making process--i.e. the public, at least indirectly, helps make the organization's decision or shape its position (41).

The internet offers all individuals an opportunity to develop an ongoing two-way symmetrical channel of communication. Grunig states that "organizations with the most excellent public relations programs were twice as likely to use the two-way symmetrical model as the less than excellent programs" (93).

PUBLIC RELATIONS' OPPORTUNITIES

According to Dave Ramacitti, in his research paper titled "Internet as a Unique Opportunity for Public Relations Practitioners to Foster a Sense of Community," states the following reasons that the internet offers outstanding public relations:

1. Internet users are an information-hungry, highly receptive audience
2. Web sites offer unlimited opportunities for the practitioner to tell their story exactly as they want it told.
3. Then there are the chat rooms, which can be PR mine fields
4. Finally, the aspect of the internet that in my view offers the most far reaching public relations opportunity is its unique ability to facilitate two way communications between a corporation and its publics (18-20).

Ramacitti cites Dick Martin, Vice President of Corporate Advertising for AT&T who states that "Anyone doing PR today who ignores the Internet is as shortsighted as the PR person in the late 1940's who ignored TV" (17). Use of web pages by both Public Relations Firms and Corporations will have a tremendous impact on business from present day into the future.

HYPOTHESES

The previous literature has been examined to set the foundation for the current project. The following hypotheses have emerged:

H_1: Public Relations Firms use more graphics than Corporations on their web pages. Toward this hypothesis, the use of pictures and striking images notable for distinctness and charm define graphics.

H_2: Public Relations Firms use more color than Corporations on their web pages. The aspects of the objects in regards to hue, lightness and saturation refer to the use of color.

H_3: Public Relations Firms use more links on their home pages than do Corporations. Toward this hypothesis, the use of identifiers attached to an element in order to indicate a connection with a similar element define links.

H_4: Public Relations web pages' content of the text is more in depth and contains more information than those of Corporations. Toward this hypothesis, the use of topics or other matter treated in written work defines content in this setting.

METHODOLOGY

This study was administered as a content analysis of selected Internet pages of Corporations and Public Relations Firms. This section explains the study research design, sampling, data collection, limitations, and other concerns.

Research Design

The research design begins with the medium by which our study was conducted--the computer. Our project focuses on the Internet and World Wide Web, thus the computer represents the sole instrument used in data collection. Although this is the only instrument, it is one that we feel is very valid and appropriate. We chose to examine the four basic components of all web pages. These components are graphics, color, links, and content. The group chose these components because of their universal value throughout all the web pages found on the Internet. In analyzing these pages, the previously stated components would provide a basis for comparison and evaluation.

Sampling

When we chose our Corporations and Public Relations Firms, we settled on a non-random convenience sampling method. A genuine random sampling of all web pages on the Internet would be near impossible and we felt no more beneficial than a convenience sample. We conducted our sampling of Public Relations Firms through a public relations research engine, which gave us a list of national Public Relations Firms. We chose prospective subjects from those included on the list. Those not listed were excluded from the sample. Corporations were selected from a convenience sampling procedure. As researchers, we have a general corporate recognition, and we selected companies with whom we experienced familiarity. We did, however, consciously select corporations with a varied product line (e.g., laundry detergent, candy, automobiles, sports, media, petroleum, and a children's theme park giant).

Sample size consisted of eight Corporations and eight Public Relations Firms. Due to the time constraints and the nature of the research, we concluded that an equal distribution of sixteen companies was an appropriate sample size.

Data Collection

Due to the nature of a content analysis study, all of the data available for analysis was previously collected as the web pages themselves. Therefore, our method of data collection used was from an observational data collection standpoint, using social artifacts and existing statistics. Data analysis was done independently by each researcher, focusing on one previously mentioned component of the web page. We conducted research over a period of one month. Results of the study were analyzed based on the group definitions of the components of the study. The criteria then were evaluated by the individual researcher.

Limitations

The first limitation recognized by the group was the sample selection and size. Sampling was not genuinely random, and thus our results are only descriptive statistics, and not inferential. We can't make generalizations to the whole population of web pages. Rather, we can analyze results and draw accurate and academic conclusions to patterns and strategies of web page development. The other limitation was sample size. A much larger sample size would aid in producing a broader scope of results. Another limitation to the study was the instability of some web page information. Web pages are constantly being updated and redesigned and over time these pages may experience substantial change in appearance.

In addition, as previously mentioned, time was a limitation in the development of this research, particularly pertaining to the coordination of group members. While the analysis was done independently, synthesis required unity of the group, which at times during the study was difficult.

Other Concerns

Among our other concerns with the project is the hypothesis testing, content validity, and research reliability. With the hypothesis testing, we utilized a directional hypothesis because it specified a certain relationship, positive or negative, between independent variables. Content validity focuses on the measurement of what is intended to be measured, and the degree to which measurements effect the range of variables. We feel that our study demonstrates a high level of

validity, based on our definitions of the concepts researched. If this study was done again, we feel confident that the same conclusions would result. For the most part, our study reliability is we concluded that if the study was conducted again at a point and time in the future, results may differ. But, despite the limitations and other concerns, we feel that we accurately and scientifically collected, analyzed, and presented the data in a manner beneficial to present interpretation, future researchers.

RESULTS

USE OF GRAPHICS AND ACTION FIGURES

Graphics are one of the most important features in a company's web site. They are what attracts visitors and maintains the attention span of "surfers". It is often the graphics that "create" the image of the company. This is extremely important considering visitors that know nothing about the company itself. The following section will analyze how important graphics are in "selling" the company's image and information. It will compare both Corporation and Public Relations web sites and how each uses graphics to its advantage.

CORPORATIONS

Tide

Upon visiting the Tide web page, the first graphic seen is the *Tide Clothesline*. This image consisted of various T-shirts hanging on the line with different choices of pages to view. This image was used consistently throughout the web site, which made it easy to maneuver. At the bottom of each page a smaller version of the *Tide Clothesline* was placed which would take you "home."

An interesting use of graphics was for the Apparel Care Icons which were displayed in two different tables for the viewer to refer to. These were very interesting and may be used in the future by manufacturers to indicate the proper cleaning of garments. The tables were very descriptive and pleasing to the eye.

The graphics used throughout the web site were clean and crisp images and they were used in moderation. Nothing moved or had any type of action on any page of the site. There were basic shapes and pictures, with the only images product-related being the actual logo and representation of the Tide products.

Pontiac

The first image on the Pontiac home page was that of fuzzy cars (different types of Pontiacs). There was a circle that featured the following changing words:

- Play the Firebird virtual keyboard

- Check out all new Sunfire AF
- Race over to the new Pontiac motorsports section

The circle was flashing too quickly to both read and process the messages. It would be much more effective to increase the time between changes.

A nice touch to the home page was that when the visitor moved the icon in front of a red light, it turned green. This tied in nicely with the car theme. Another action piece was that when the user moved the icon to a car, the lights would come on. These features added nicely to the page.

There were sections of the web page that lacked graphics and would have benefited from them. An example of this was in the "Find a Dealer" section. It only included text and few graphics. A picture or two would have enhanced the eye appeal.

An effective graphic was the Pontiac Racing picture which took up half the page. The user had to scroll down to read about the topic. Other positive features were the graphics of the yellow Firebird Iroc and the black Firebird. The Grand Am homepage featured an ever-rotating maroon and then white car. The Firebird home page even had a moving logo that looked like it was on fire. The shooting flames were very eye-catching.

Pontiac featured merchandise called "Wearables" that were for sale, but the graphics were too small and blurry to distinguish. If Pontiac executives wanted to sell the merchandise, they needed to make it more accessible and appealing to the consumer.

Some areas of the web site needed a larger font to be legible. An example of this was on the Firebird page. It was hard to read the sub-topics, thus the viewer would be discouraged to continue the browse.

Disney

Disney is known for its use of color and creativity to create "magic." Its home page was no different than anything else they put their name on. The graphics included all sorts of recognizable characters, with overlapping pictures and moving images. Disney used both

sketched and clearly defined images, as well as cartoons and photos. Each day the site changes to "entertain" its visitors.

There were four main areas that were consistent in the home page. They consisted of "Today @ Disney," "Family," "Kids" and "Shop." The title remained unchanged as the user moved the cursor over the square which represented each topic. The featured pictures switched to a more detailed written description of what would be found when further explored.

The entire site was theme related, and the current theme was Halloween. All graphics were related to the theme and provided an easy flow for the viewer. The Disney characters were decked out in Halloween apparel, and even the "Shop" featured Halloween costumes of a plethora of Disney friends. You could also order "Pooh Grams" which are to be sent, like flowers for all kinds of special occasions. Name the occasion and there is a dressed-up stuffed Pooh to match. An interactive part of the page was related to the latest Disney film released: Rocketman. This page featured an astronaut tumbling from off in the distance until it hit the screen face first. The movements were impressive. It also offered a Mars Quiz and Game that had moving parts (a clock, two men: one picking his nose, the other scratching his head), as well as high quality graphics.

Houston Rockets

The first thing noticed on the Rockets homepage was the logo: a basketball with the Houston Rockets logo wrapped around it. It was a terrific graphic that was consistently used throughout the site. The action photo of Charles Barkley was also a nice touch, as he was a recognizable Rockets' players. The background graphic for most pages in the site was that of a "ripped" page. It was red and white, making a bold statement in itself.

A majority of the site provided information to the viewer on player statistics, the NBA schedule for the whole season and other information based screens. Photos were used occasionally, but it was mostly black text on a white background.

The photo gallery featured many action pictures of players, which were large and impressive. Each one told a story and sections of the photos were enhanced with strips of color. There were lots of photos to choose from and each was a quality graphic.

Skittles

The Skittles home page featured many moving graphics. The first image seen was the Skittles logo with a rainbow that turned into a waving racing flag. There was also a racing helmet that was highlighted with a revolving beam of light which continuously rotated around it.

Skittles used many positive images to sell both its racing and product. The site used photos, such as that of the race car driver in a Skittles colored frame. Its use of the graphics was effective and eye-pleasing. On the *race report*, a green flag moved across the upper left corner and the car came speeding across the page. At *the team* page, a race car took off and is followed by mechanics who run behind it. On the *talk to us* page, a computer and car graphic were tied together with a radio wave which bounced back and forth between them.

Almost every page of the Skittles site had a moving part. This was exciting for the viewer who traveled among the pages. All images tied together and created a unifying picture of what Skittles and racing was all about.

NBC

The NBC home page used a tremendous amount of color, design and picture. There were overlapping images, both sketchy and clear; as well as every color that can be imagined. Each page was different from the next, which was confusing at times. Due to the complexity of the images used, the viewer can be distracted from the content.

A moving part which was used effectively throughout the site was a circling round ball which said "GO." This was helpful for the viewer to quickly locate the place to press to move on through out the web page. Another impressive graphic was the TV square featuring ever-changing pictures and moving images. It represented watching television because it never stopped changing.

Throughout the pages the NBC peacock logo was used consistently. This was nice for the viewer to identify that he/she was still within the realm of the NBC web site. Throughout the internet as a whole, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether or not the user has left the original site.

A nice feature was the on-line story of Chloe which was filled with all types of graphics. Each page used images such as photos or maps or a diary page or even hand-writing. The story itself was an engaging use of graphics as the storyteller was personable, drawing the viewer in.

ABC

This web site used clean cut images and had a calmer feel than that of NBC. The kids section of the site featured Saturday morning cartoons with flashing clouds that switched from pictures to word descriptions. The visuals that were used worked together in harmony with the text.

The ABC soap operas featured "The Daily Scoop," which gave a daily recap of each soap. Each recap had an action photo from the day's episode and gave a sense of the storyline of the day. The ABC logo was used throughout the pages to aid the viewer in staying within the ABC limits.

When finding the local affiliate for ABC, the site offered a map on which you moved the cursor to the desired state. KCRG is the local station for ABC, so that web site was also analyzed. KCRG used its logo at the top of each page and inserted photos of the staff members according to which area the viewer wanted to see. When you look into sports, the "sports team" is featured at the top of the screen. If the user looked into weather, the "First Alert Storm Team" was smiling at you.

A nice touch was the "livecam" which showed a live view from a camera placed at random places across the United States. I chose the Hawaiian Eye which offered a view of Aloha Tower on the island of Hawaii. A perfect cure for the cold weather blues.

Texaco

Texaco had a decent use of graphics, but nothing too elaborate. The logo was omni-present among the pages, consisting of a red circle with a white star and "T" for Texaco. There were clip art images on every page, but none had moving part.

An interesting layout of the page was the left third of the screen. This section did not change, although the viewer would be scanning through multiple pages. It did change when you looked at the Texaco racing.

The most elaborate graphic to be found in the pages was on the press release section. It was a flashing square that changed into three different pictures. Unfortunately, all the pictures were fuzzy and barely recognizable. If the web page included only one clear picture instead of three low-quality images, the site could have been more effective.

PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS

Montana Adscripts

The only graphic pictured on the home page of Adscripts was a red feather logo which followed the name of the agency. The site contained mostly text and little graphic variety. Visitors could choose to press the red feather buttons for further exploration, but even then mostly text appeared.

The creators offered a sample of past work they have done for web pages. The web page for their client was colorful and incorporated pictures to enhance its eye appeal. Visitors even had the option of clicking on a photo to enlarge it to the size of the screen.

Although the sample of their work was impressive, the home page of the agency was below average. Graphics could have made this page more effective.

Ballard Communications

The site looked very business-like and the graphics resembled that of letterhead. The pictures offered in the site were all squares, almost identical in size. Each graphic was placed in an orderly and suitable way. The majority of the site consisted of text and no sample of previous work was included.

The logo included a photo of a sunset, with palm trees and although the firm is based out of Las Vegas, it didn't coincide with the rest of their business image. There is no connection between palm trees and public relations.

The graphics featured on the front page were repeated at the top of the pages for each of the specific subjects. After the initial graphic was inserted at the top, all that remained was text for the viewer to digest. Graphics could have been used to decrease the monotony of the text.

MCS Home

The first thing a visitor would notice on this site is the extensive use of graphics. It started with a photo of the MCS building and lawn, and the viewer immediately learned a who MCS is. Scrolling down the page, more graphics appeared that blended in with the color and shape schemata. Visitors could click on different parts of the pictures to learn about all aspects of the firm. The graphics were metaphorical images that the writing was related to. For example, the "New" graphic was that of a sleeping baby and the "Our Services" graphic featured a plumber working under a sink.

The viewer had the option of clicking on each staff member to discover more information on what the employees do for MCS. The graphic was a picture of the entire staff posed in front of the MCS sign. When visitors click on the person, a head shot photo appeared with a short biography. It was apparent that the staff at MCS were very open, caring and friendly people. Each person had funny traits that he/she shared with the viewer.

All graphics throughout the site "match" each other, with round edges and complimentary colors. All screens included loads of pictures, but contained no moving parts. MCS also offered a "brag book" that showed off work they had done for current clients. It was evident that they put time into both their web page as well as in their clients.

Storytellers

The first screen was a fantasy theme. The entire site flowed together like a story, which is effective to tie in with their company name. The swan is an image of beauty and pride, and the

company used this for its main imagery. The Storytellers' logo faded into the background of one of the screens, which offered a unique interpretation.

The topics for further exploration were offered at the left of the screen, but were too small and were written in black font on a blue background. The font needed to be bigger and lighter in color in order for it to be more easily read.

There were two sections of the site that were under construction. These two sections included the "Clients" and "Our Company." These two areas are important, so it is crucial that Storytellers complete them.

America House

A bubble containing Newport-Rhode Island was the first object a visitor saw upon entering this web site. The graphics used to represent the topics to choose from were both interesting and eye-catching. The logo for America House was a clever graphic as the words glowed from a dark blue background. The toolbar showing the options for exploring was used continuously throughout the site so the viewer could not get lost.

Depending on the topic a visitor would choose to explore, the graphic of that subject would travel with you through the web site. This made it simple to get around. America House showcased some of its work, providing a graphic on each client. The use of graphics wasn't extensive, but they used enough to add some appeal to the information provided.

Wordsnorth

The log was interesting for this site, as it glowed from the top of the page. The lettering was shadowed on many of the subtopics that were represented. The whole site primarily consisted of text, with an occasional change of font size. The only graphic found was that of the company logo.

Edelman Worldwide

This is the self-proclaimed largest PR firm in the world. It had an extensive web site with advertising all over the home page. It featured a rotating world at the beginning of the front page and corresponding rotating worlds at the bottom of each following page. The site incorporated

photos of the founder, descriptive maps of branching offices and contact names at all sites. It had a clear, professional image that stated, "We know what we're doing." Graphics were used to support the content.

Boasberg Valentine Radford (BVR)

This logo resembled a wrought iron fence, which contains the letters: BVR. It was almost too messy as the lines were on top of each other. There were no graphics throughout this site and the only variations were occasional differences in font size. A unique display of a quote was one of Michael Jordan in which his name was shadowed behind his words. This was the extent of the use of graphic design within the site.

COLOR

When we talk analysis of color in the web sites researched, we can begin by taking a look at the actual colors used by each Corporation. The differences there will probably coincide with our expectations as to the use of these colors. But an analysis of why these particular colors were used, and the manner in which they were used on the page will help to contribute to our understanding of the particular strategies that each Corporation used when designing their respective pages. We begin by looking at the major corporations.

In general, a couple of themes were present throughout these pages: 1) All of the pages used a tremendous amount of color; 2) None of the pages used a predominantly white background; and 3) Every page made use of multiple colors for the text on the screen. On the inverse side of this, every page was different from another. Each chose strategies that made their product stand out. While there were many circumstances where two pages were rivals, the strategies were fundamentally different.

The first pages that jumped out at the visitor with their color were Tide, Disney, and Skittles. The strategy here was to use lots of color, especially vibrant, primary colors. But the main difference was the background. Tide used oranges, yellows, and blues to grab and hold the visitors attention. The beginning of the page used a soft, sky blue background behind the bright

orange colors. The creation of a bright summer day wasdeveloped. The colors gave the product and the page a clean, refreshing feel.

While Disney also had a white background, large blocks of color acted as a backdrop for the text and graphics. For Disney, their target audience was families and younger children. Children respond to primary colors of red, blue, and yellow. As a result, all of the text on the page was written in these primary colors for easier reading and a livelier text. To take this color plan a step further, orange, green, and purple are the secondary colors, which was precisely the color of the backdrop blocks. This page was very visually stimulating, specifically because Disney focused on eliminating the white background . While white represents an absence of color, black is the absorption of color. The black color created a stronger look on the page.

Skittles had also taken this approach. Their page displayed all of the vibrant colors of Disney, but they set their rainbow on a black background. With an older audience, visitors may recieve a little older and mature feeling to the page by simply changing the background color of a web page..

Pontiac had also used this background strategy. But with a much older target market, they have eliminated all of the vibrant colors and replaced them with simply red and silver against a jet black background. With the elimination of colors, the page became classier and more professional. They showed six cars on the page displayed in either red, black, or silver. The page gave a very racy, yet visually striking corporate look.

Red and white seemed to be a very popular choice for web page design. Texaco and the Houston Rockets helped to promote this popularity. Although the color red is a representative color for both organizations, they exploited this on the web. Texaco used a white text on a red and black background swatch, which gave their page a feeling of depth. The text seemed to jump out at you. The Rockets used their red and white colors to contrast one and give the page a crispness. The team logo and the image of Charles Barkley were outlined in red, white, and black, and this technique also made the graphics appear visually closer.

NBC and ABC also tred to design their web pages with corporate colors in mind. NBC is affiliated with a peacock, and they used many of them on their web page. NBC's web background is black, which made the brightness of the peacock stand out. They also used lots of shades of navy blue and purple in their background to create a sophisticated, and soothing early morning look.

ABC, on the other hand, utilized their network colors of maize yellow and black. They included a maize swatch of color on the left with black and a black background with maize border covering the middle two-thirds of the page. This was very different from NBC, as it created more of a dullness. A visitor would view ABC's page as conservative and targeting an older generation. With NBC's home page, a visitor would think style and class. It was all beacuse of the choice of color on the web pages.

When we researched the Public Relations Firms, we noticed a substantial difference from the corporations. One of these major differences was the overall color complexity of the corporation web pages compared to the relative color simplicity of the Public Relations Firms. While the Corporations used a variety of colors in the pages, the PR firms used a limited pallet of colors. Even those corporations, such as Pontiac or Texaco, who stuck to only a few colors, used red as one of those colors. The color red is very visually stimulating and effective with simply black and white. PR firms did not do that.

The Adscripts page used splashes of red sparingly, but the red did not dominate. The same can be said of the Marketing and Communications Strategies, Inc.(MCS) home page. This was perhaps the most colorful of the PR Firms selected. They used a variety of colors, from greens to pinks to blues, but used very little red. Here, the colors were not used as an attention-getter. The colors were much softer serving the role of filler and contributing to the page but not dominating it.

Another interesting color choice was demonstrated by America House, a firm that chose only soft, pastel colors for their web page. Soft purples, tans, greens, and yellows conveyed comfort and relaxation to the page. In all, PR Firms went with a simple color scheme to

compliment the information on the page, while the Corporations used a more aggressive approach to color.

A second color strategy that the PR Firms used, which contrasted the Corporation page selections, was the use of very light and mostly stark white backgrounds. With the exception of the Storytellers and Wordsnorth pages, each page displayed a great deal of white. This created a professional crispness, accentuated by the fact that the text was either black or navy blue. This strategy was opposite of NBC for example, but did not manage to create the same professional appearance. Here there were two varying approaches, but the end result was fundamentally the same. Each communicated effectively for its particular Corporation.

As mentioned before, Storytellers and Wordsnorth did not choose this background strategy. But when a visitor looked at these pages, another theme of the PR pages surfaced. They all used a minimal number of different or bright colors to create a look of sophistication and class. Wordsnorth's site was entirely gold text on a black background. But the gold text played with shading and varying degrees of gold, which really commanded respect when you view the page.

Storytellers used the same theory, and created a page composed entirely of black and dark blue. The only contrast was with a crisp white swan. This page was very simple, yet very elegant. All of the PR pages managed to create a look of class and dignity through the simple use of colors, solid backgrounds and high contrast between text and background colors.

LINKS

On the Internet, links can take us to interesting and exciting places. Links can help us learn more information on a specific or related topic or they can take us to a new web address. Links are very essential to any web address or home page. Some web users love to explore web sites by looking at inter-linked pages. Links are used by a web address designer as methods to organize their information.

By looking at the links of our selected 16 web addresses, eight Corporations and eight Public Relations Firms, there were five themes that one can envision. The first of these themes is

that the organizations averaged more links than public relations firms. Four out of the eight public relations firms selected only had 10-12 links and no external links outside of the web address to clients. As a whole, public relations firms averaged about 17 links per web address. Two public relations firms provided links to their clients, whose web pages they had designed. The Ballards Communications firm provided 15 links to the hottest Las Vegas web addresses. They also provided links to local news stations and national news sources, which would be very beneficial to clients who liked to be informed about what currently the media might be reporting about their corporation. But these two features for links were very rare for public relations firms. In comparison, the eight organizations averaged 26 links per web address. Four out of the eight organizations had over 30 internal and external links to explore. From this comparison, one can conclude that organizations had more links then public relations firms for exploration.

Another theme that one could pull out is that the organizations have more external links than public relations firms. As referred to earlier, most public relations did not have links outside of their web address. When comparing the number of external links, four out the eight public relations firms did have some links to other places. One public relations firm only had two links to its sister corporations. The other three Public Relations Firms had links to one or more of the following including links to their clients, other sites in their state, and to news stations. All of the eight Corporations have external links. The average number varied quite a bit, and is estimated at 5-10 links. A couple of Corporations only had one or two external links.

External links give web users ways to explore many different areas and related areas of interest whose direct addresses may not be known. External links are also beneficial for businesses who would like to see the kinds of public relations services performed by different firms in order to compare their results. From a business perspective, however, organizations might not want to employ external links because these would take the web user to other addresses away from exploring the current home page. From this discussion, one can conclude that the organizations had more external links than public relations firms.

The next theme to be discussed is that the links at the organizations tend to be more user friendly than at public relations firms. Only one public relations firms listed a link named FAQ or Frequently Asked Questions. Only one public relations firm had link to e-mail a problem or complaint with the web address to the webmaster. One public relations firm web address had two internal links under construction, which is the same as saying there is no current access to this link or information. This can be very frustrating to the web user who wants to learn about this particular area. In comparison, four out of the eight organizations had methods to help beginning web users. Their methods included one or more of the following: FAQs, webmaster links, help links and web guides. Links such as FAQs tend to reduce the amount of e-mail an Corporation receives from new users of the Internet that might not know about their business. These kinds of links benefit the user of the Internet and also are reflective of the Corporation's image.

The Internet is gaining new users all the time. Corporations need to be sensitive to their publics needs. One can conclude that the Corporations' web addresses are more user-friendly than the public relations firms' web addresses.

However, all organizations and public relations firms have direct e-mail links for contacting them. This is another theme pulled from the analysis. This feature helps Corporations answer questions about their businesses, to find out about current feelings from web users and to gain business. Public relations firms would have similar purposes for their e-mail links. This also helps for firms to track and find out about those who are visiting their web page. This is very interesting information for web address designers who want to please their audiences. E-mail links have an essential function. They serve as a method for feedback. They connect both the organizations and public relations firms with their audiences. The theme of direct e-mail links can be very beneficial to both organizations and public relations firms.

The characteristics of links of a home page are reflective of the Corporation's image. The number and the kinds of links add into the user's public perception of the web address. This public perception shapes an Corporation's image. The links employed can be descriptive of how

creative an Corporation was in designing their web page. For example, one public relations firm, Boasberg, Valentine and Radford, had only internal links that explained about their services, clients, portfolios, career opportunities and strategic plan. In comparing these links to an Corporation, such as Tide, the public relations firm is not very creative in the development of their links. Tide has both external and internal links. They have fun links, like "Spin and Win, Tide Trivia, FAQs, Tips and Time savers, What's New, NASCAR on-line, Tide Racing, Stain Detective, Tide Archives and more. Tide's links are more creative and provide more information than the public relations firm. The public relations firm's web address is too generalized. One can see these kinds of links at every type of Corporation. Public relations firms should be more creative because they are able to research and analyze their audiences. From this, conclusions for concerning design elements are drawn and strategies are developed to attract the most visitors. Links are important for providing access to information about the Corporation and to related topics or web pages that are of interest to the user.

CONTENT

Each individual web page includes different types of content because of the variety of companies, products, and services researched. The content of a web page is extremely important for a company, especially if that company's goal is to disseminate information to the public. This section will analyze the most distinctive similarities and differences within and between public relations and corporation web sites.

PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS

After analyzing what each firm included in their individual web sites, a few major themes emerged. These included Services, Meeting the Staff, Clients, and Focus/Mission Statement. Every Public Relations Firm included Services and Meeting the Staff sections. The services of every firm differed. For example, Adscripts, an advertising and public relations firm located in Montana, included these services in their web page layout:

- Full public relations campaigns
- Media relations

- Crisis communications
- Advertising programs and marketing plans
- Creative services
- Research - both on-line (Dialog/Knight-Ridder) and manual
- Training in media relations and crisis communications
- Consulting

BVR Public Relations, out of Kansas City, offered these services to their clients:

- Media Relations
- Investor Relations
- Sales Support
- Crisis Communications
- Video Communications
- Communications Training
- On-Line Communications
- Special Events Planning

Looking at these two examples, one can see the variety of services Public Relations Firms support. Adscripts was also an advertising agency that supported advertising programs and marketing as services. BVR, however, included investor relations, sales support, and special events in their services. It was important to note that each firm had included on-line communications as a service. They recognized that this was more than just the latest trend--it was an integral part of the marketing mix.

Another theme that emerged in the research was the Public Relations Firms' recognition of their staff. Many included pictures and backgrounds of the people employed by the company. For instance, Edelman Public Relations Worldwide, includes pictures, quotes, and biographies of employees. The Founder and Chairman, Daniel J. Edelman, was quoted in the web site.

"In 1952, I dreamed of a firm dedicated to the practice of public relations and committed to client service. Today we're one of the five largest firms in the world, but our focus has remained the same--delivering outstanding results for our clients."

On the other hand, America House Communications out of Rhode Island, had a groups picture of their employees. Under the icon "Teamwork," the picture was preceded by the following information:

"When you work with America House you get a fully integrated agency with a fully integrated group of experienced people working on your account. We call it teamwork, teaming with our clients and departments within the agency."

The third major category that six out of the eight web sites included was identification of their clients. These clients may not have been personally named in every web site, but an overview of what clients they serve best was included.

For example, BVR Public Relations Firm stated that they have maintained long-term client relationships with Fortune 500 companies as well as those that are just as big in entrepreneurial spirit. BVR has also had a strong presence in the pharmaceutical and health care industries, and with national consumer producer companies, such as Harley-Davidson, Wal-Mart, and Microsoft.

Focus or Mission was another feature included in five out of the eight Public Relations Firms. Storytellers Creative Communications of Pleasanton, California included their mission at the bottom of their home page. There was no icon for this mission statement and read:

"Storytellers Creative Communications of Pleasanton, California, is a creative communications firm providing a complete range of services including: marketing communications, advertising, web design, packaging design, graphic design, multimedia, marketing research, demographic research, corporate identity, public relations, collateral materials, promotional campaigns and direct mail."

This mission statement more or less was a sentence about the services they provide. Opposite of that was Wordsnorth International, a Canadian firm that stated their mission statement as:

"WordsAmericas is a private trade consulting and communications firm established to develop trade opportunities for members of the Canadian business community seeking interests in the Latin America marketplace. WordsAmericas provides its services through the knowledge and experience of experts in Latin American trade, supported by a network of competent professionals in Canada, the U.S. and all areas of Latin America. WordsAmericas establishes beneficial trade relationships because we appreciate the economic, political and cultural factors that influence and motivate business and government in both Latin America and Canada."

Other themes that emerged from the public relations web sites were "Background," "Experience," "Employment Opportunities," "Contact Us" and "What's New." Not one firm included all of these topics, but the most important should be the "Contact Us" section.

America House Communications included an icon in its home page called Contact Us. With a click, the visitor could find the mailing address, directions to the firm, and a special place for comments and appointment-making via E-mail. Other web pages included E-mail addresses, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers, but did not provide a special page designed for this. Most of this contact information was at the end of the home page or the last page of the web site.

CORPORATIONS

By analyzing the Corporations selected to research, the three themes that emerged among the web sites were "Contacting Us," "Product Information" and "What's New." Every Corporation included a section for visitors to contact them. Contacting the Corporation seemed to be the most important goal for the web site creators to portray. On every web site, there was a specific icon assigned to E-mail or other contact possibilities.

For example, the Houston Rockets NBA home page included an entire page that visitors can enter their name, E-mail address, City/State/Province, and a large box for a message. All the visitor had to do was click on the "Submit Message" to send the E-mail. On the other hand, the

Texaco home page included an icon to contact them, but it only went to the E-mail message board. It did not include a separate page for visitors to enter their name or address. It immediately sent the message without any demographic information to type in. Texaco did, on the other hand, offer an entire page of topics related to customer questions.

For example, the page included these topics:

- Credit Card Services department...concerns@texaco.com
- Non-technical questions...concerns@texaco.com
- Diversity and Economic Opportunity...feedback@texaco.com
- Investor Relations and Shareholder Services...invest@texaco.com
- Texaco and the Arts...arts@texaco.com
- Star Mart Franchises...starmart@texaco.com
- Texaco Natural Gas...robinmd@texaco.com ...

As one can see, there are different E-mail addresses for different topics. This way, if you have a specific topic that you would like to address, using one of the E-mail addresses that is assigned that topic will guarantee your E-mail will be sent to the correct address..

The second main theme throughout the Corporations' web pages was Product Information. The Corporations were very detailed in telling the public about what their products were, how the products were better than other products and how to obtain their products. Like the Public Relations Firms, Corporations are in business to make a profit.

A good example of Product Information was the Pontiac web site. It had pictures of each of its automobiles, ranging from the Bonneville to the Sunfire. A visitor could click on one of the vehicles and see a description of the car, price ranges, fuel economy, options, colors, engine information, interior options, and even where the vehicle could be purchased at a local dealership.

Another good example of Product Information was within the ABC web site. This site was loaded with graphics that also served as icons. With a click, a visitor could see when the episode of a particular show will air, what the next story line would be, and information about

each of the characters. Sometimes the information in these types of webs sites could be overloading, but if a visitor knew exactly what to look for, information would be available with just a click of the mouse.

A final correlating theme among the Corporation web site was informing the visitor of "What's New." Six out of the eight Corporations cited new product information, special events, meetings, or new additions to the Corporation (from employees to takeovers).

A great example of what was new in a Corporation was the Tide web site. As of November 2, 1997, Tide had these new offers for their web site visitors:

- Tide High Efficiency--Specially formulated for front-loading washers.
- New Apparel Care Labels--The FTC has released updated symbols which clothing manufacturers may be using on their apparel care labels. Most of the symbols may seem familiar, but there are some new symbols and guidelines. Check out the latest Apparel Care Labeling symbols to find out what they are.
- Tide Mountain Spring--A new fragrance for Tide laundry detergent.
- The Stain Detective--Got a touch stain on a favorite piece of clothing? Not a problem for Tide's amazing Stain Detective. It will analyze your situation and give you the inside scoop on how to solve your tough stain problem.
- Spin and Win--Come visit laundry-doers from around the United States and put your own spin on answers to our questions. You could win a year's supply of your favorite Tide products or a Whirlpool washing machine.

Another site for What's New was the NBC web site. It listed what the new shows and ratings were for each of the sitcoms and dramas throughout the week. Updated daily, this web site highlighted the new episodes of every on-air program on NBC. This would be a full-time job in itself to keep the episodes updated on a daily basis.

An important finding in all of the corporation web sites, was the fact that Texaco, Skittles, Pontiac, and Tide were affiliated with racing teams. Sponsorship is extremely important in large Corporations to maintain healthy relationships with companies not affiliated with the

company. The advertising on NASCAR race cars and the billboards around the track is very important coverage for Corporations. Many people attend the races and watch these races on television. It is a great perk to be able to sponsor a race team with such a high viewing and participating audience.

Other areas that were not as significant in the corporation web sites were the histories of the companies, offering on-line stores, and employment opportunities. Only a select few included any of these areas on their web sites. Disney, Texaco, and the Houston Rockets offered on-line stores, but the availability of merchandise compared to actual physical stores were limited. Both NBC and ABC offered icons to list employment opportunities.

DISCUSSION

In the analysis and results reported above, the graphics used in the Public Relations Firms versus Corporations suggested that in general, Corporations use much more elaborate and advanced graphics than Public Relations Firms. Overall, Corporations used moving graphics, highly technical pictures and hand drawings. Public Relations Firms relied more heavily on text to attract potential customers. The theme for Corporations was to visually attract and impress the viewers with an abundance of visual effects. Public Relations Firms relied more on their reputation to attract clientele. A viewer of Tide, for example, may use the web page strictly for entertainment. On the other hand, a viewer of Ballard Communications may be specifically looking for a firm to do business with. The above information illustrated that our Hypothesis 1 was null because Public Relations Firms did not use more graphics on their web pages compared to Corporations.

In the results of the web page color analysis, the authors revealed differences in the strategies of Corporations and Public Relations Firms. The first real difference showed that the Corporations used many vibrant colors, while the Public Relations Firms chose a simpler color scheme. The primary colors of red, blue, and yellow dominated Corporate pages, while the Public Relations Firms implemented more conservative choices of black, white and navy blue.

A second thematical difference revolved around the choice of background color. A

consistency throughout the background, primarily with whites or lighter colors identified the PR firms, while a varying range of color swatches, with a limited use of white, linked Corporate web pages.

However, one underlying theme was common throughout the pages, and each Corporation used color in different ways to accomplish a certain theme. Every page looked professional and crisp. Whether it was black backgrounds or white, bright red text or emerald green, each Corporation portrayed an image of dignity through their use of colors on the page. Colors tell great stories and create certain moods, and all of these businesses used color effectively and efficiently. As evidence to the color section of the research, Hypotheses 2 was also refuted. Public Relations Firms do not use more color than Corporations on their web pages.

Through the web page link analysis, certain themes were identified. First, Corporations' web sites contained more links than the Public Relations Firms' web sites. On the average, Corporations had 26 links per address while Public Relations Firms had 17 links.

Secondly, Corporations used more external links than Public Relations Firms did. While the links varied from organization to organization, every Corporation used external links. Only half of the Public Relations Firms chose to include links beyond their own organization.

Finally, Corporation links were found to be more user-friendly than Public Relations Firms. Corporations used methods such as FAQs, webmaster links, help links, web guides and E-mail addresses to aid the web browser. Although all Public Relations Firms had E-mail as well, these other methods were not available on every PR web page.

As these results indicate, Hypothesis 3 was also disproved. Public Relations Firms do not use more links on their web pages than Corporations.

The content of the web pages produced varying themes. Public Relations Firms included sections such as "Services," "Meeting the Staff," "Clients," and "Focus/Mission Statement." Corporations, on the other hand, involved "Contacting Us," "Product Information" and "What's New" sections. Through analysis of these sections, the quantity of visitor information was

greater in the Corporation web sites than the Public Relations Firms' sites. The content of corporate links provided a broader depth of information than the Public Relations web sites.

Hypothesis 4 was also untrue. The content of Public Relations web sites did not contain more depth of information than those of Corporations.

In the age of new technology, the web pages on the internet are increasingly becoming a way to communicate with intended publics. Future research may include how these publics receive information from web sites. Every organization has a different strategy on web page design. By studying how effective these web pages are to the consumers, organizations can gain an understanding of how to effectively market themselves to their intended target audience.

As a result of this particular study, we found that Corporations placed a different emphasis on their web page design than did Public Relations Firms. Through future research in this area of study, one may find the reasons why these two types of organization differ from each other.

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LIST OF WEB PAGES ANALYZED

(See Appendices)

http://www.abc.com/kcrg.com

http://www.americahouse.com

http://www.ballardscommunications.com

http://www.bvrpr.com

http://www.disney.com

http://www.edelman.com

http://www.mcshome.com

http://www.montana.com/adscripts

htttp://www.nba.com/rockets

http://www.nbc.com/kwwl.com

http://www.pontiac.com

http://www.skittles.com

http://www.storytellers.com

http://www.texaco.com

http://www.tide.com

http://www.wordsnorth.com